News Release

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Local Government

Greater enforcement mechanisms to address substandard housing issues (07/04/02)

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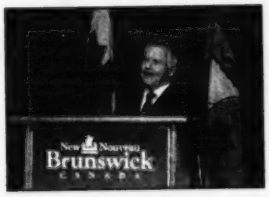
SAINT JOHN (CNB) - As of today, New Brunswick municipalities have the tools they need to enhance compliance with, and strengthen enforcement of, their substandard-housing by-laws. Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour Minister Ed Doherty made the announcement today.

New amendments to the *Municipalities Act* will assist in tackling the issue of quality affordable housing for families throughout the province.

(Multimedia)



"Some landlords in the province do not maintain their properties in conditions that are acceptable," Doherty said. "In many instances, occupants of these properties do not have a choice because these apartments are what they can afford. That is why our government had to do something, as outlined in our *Charter for Change*, in order to empower municipalities to deal with issues of substandard housing." Doherty spoke on behalf of Local Government Minister Victor Boudreau.

The new legislation gives municipalities the authority to issue tickets for offences related to non-compliance with maintenance and occupancy standards by-laws and dangerous and unsightly premises by-laws. A municipality may make a property owner aware that they are out of compliance or issue a warning to that effect. If the owner does not take action, a notice will be issued identifying what needs to be repaired and by when. If the owner does not comply with the notice, a ticket can be issued.

"This new provision responds to the real-life experiences relayed to the Government by New Brunswick municipalities," Doherty said. "The ticketing process reduces the time it now takes to levy a fine through the court system, making the process more effective and efficient for both communities and the courts."

Minimum fines have also been increased to provide an incentive to landlords to make necessary repairs. For instance, the minimum fine for landlords for non-compliance with maintenance and occupancy by-laws and notices to make repairs will be $1,000. The previous minimum fine was $240. For each day the offence continues, the charge will be $240. The maximum fines for all parties covered by this legislation will increase from $2,620 to $5,120.

In addition, if landlords don't make changes in situations such as an unstable roof, dangerous wiring or inadequate plumbing, that pose a serious threat to tenants, a municipality can carry out the repair work. If the property owner refuses to pay for the remedial costs, they will be added to the property owner's tax bill and will become a debt owing to the Province.

The Department of Local Government will work with municipalities and provide them with the support they need to implement these new provisions.

"These new regulations will improve the lives of tenants living in apartment buildings, rooming and boarding houses," Doherty said. "They will improve the quality of life in our neighbourhoods and in our communities. Achieving self-sufficiency as a province starts with assisting individuals. Lack of quality affordable housing affects individuals and families in many ways, from higher utility bills to poorer health. Today we have taken one more step in assisting individuals on their road to self-sufficiency."

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